

Whitefish State Lands Advisory Committee Meeting
April 29, 2004
North Valley Hospital
6 pm

Committee Members Attending

Rob Hedstrom
Steve Lorch
Alan Elm
Lisa Horowitz
Leesa Valentino
Marshall Friedman
Charlie Abell
Sheila Bowen
Greg Gunderson
Richard Marriott

Minutes Review

Approved unanimously.

Land Board Meeting

Advisory Committee is scheduled on the Land Board calendar for Monday, May 17, 2004.

Alan Elm and Marshall Friedman are planning to go to Helena next week to meet with Land Board staff and potentially Tom Shultz and Jeanne Holmgren of DNRC.

Steve will email group time, location, placement on the agenda for the Land Board meeting and to find out timing to be included in packet for May 17 meeting.

Marshall volunteers to help prepare presentation to the Land Board.

Action:

- Set up a time for Marshall, Leesa, Andy, Alan to meet to prepare presentation.
Leesa will email to confirm time.

Top of the Mountain Meeting

Last Thursday, representatives from the Advisory Committee met with Bob Sandman, Greg Poncin, City and County Planners, to discuss the goals and end product of the plan.

Discussed DNRC Plan Principles. All committee members have received a copy of this document via email.

Brought up that there might be fears of an alternate plan. As a group, agreed that there would not be any surprises. Agreed that there would be some compromises, but that the committee would stand behind the plan.

Discussion of Draft Structure of Plan:

Lisa Horowitz and Marshall had a phone conference with Marty Zeller to discuss the Top of the Mountain, the Advisory Committee process and where they want to go with it. Zeller is interested in writing the plan. He has made a formal proposal, which was distributed to group.

Overview of proposal:

Marty Zeller with Conservation Partners has submitted a proposal to the Advisory Committee outlining a scope of work to assist in the development of a concept plan and implementation program for the 13,000 acres of Trust Land surrounding Whitefish. Zeller is a site planner whose services include the talents of his consulting team comprised of a landscape architect and GIS mapping team. His proposal includes a series of three 2-day work sessions with public meetings at the end of each, site analysis, and development of a final concept plan. Details of his scope of work are still to be negotiated with representatives from the Advisory Committee as well as the project budget.

Discussion:

- Bus tour would fit in well to Workshop #1. Initial public hearing that is proposed probably not necessary since this has already been accomplished. More public hearings will follow.

Regarding Site Analysis:

- Need to discuss Mapping proposal. Proposed services would be conducted from out-of-state. It is important to emphasize these out of state consultants are being hired to write our plan not their plan.
- Committee voices concern that they would like to consider hiring GIS work in the Flathead to keep the money here.
- Need to marry this proposal with the Top of the Mountain document/established framework by the Advisory Committee.
- Lisa says the \$48,840.00 total estimate is reasonable for a nationally known consultant.

Marshall has set up a conference call next with Marty to discuss proposal. The newly incorporated 501(c)3 organization, Flathead Gateway Partners is the available vehicle for tax-deductible donations for this cause.

Has there ever been a breakdown of expenditures from DNRC for original contract? There is one available. Approximately \$15,000 remains from original donation.

- Important to clearly define responsibility for DNRC and Advisory Committee as well as Zeller's responsibility in developing an end product that will be suitable to be an amendment to the underlying local land-use planning document.
- Positive thing that Marty brings to the table: Understands the State Trust Land issue, knowledgeable, honest and open about turning points of his experiences, will be invaluable in helping the group get to the "top of the mountain."
- Agreement that there is a need to hire someone. Agreement with mapping out expectations. There is concern about how to raise 50K to pay for it. At this time, there isn't a budget for the group.

Action:

- Steve Lorch will talk with David Greer to find out details about the remaining money from original contract.
- Marshall asks DNRC to ask permission from donor for reallocation of the money to support the continuation of the planning process.
- Marshall is donating \$1000 and John Kramer is donating \$1000 to start out the process.
- Proposal will be modified after Marshall's conversation with Marty Zeller. Marshall will email the group by Monday night to start a dialogue. Committee will read and contact Marshall with comments and questions to ask Zeller.

Action:

- Group will make a decision at next Thursday's meeting. Group will meet every Thursday from now on.
- Steve will contact Real Estate Management Bureau for additional funding to meet approximately 2/3 of the \$3000.
- Steve Lorch proposes that DNRC will pick up with 2/3 of the \$3000 of the cost of aerial photos. There is already a commitment of \$500 from the DNRC Kalispell Unit Forestry area; Lisa says she is confident that Stillwater Forester will give \$500.
- Sheila Bowen agrees to Co-Chair the fundraising committee with Marshall.

Committee Principles

Leesa Valentino distributed a document of committee principles that was suggested to be completed by Bob Sandman to help guide the group's work. Brief discussion and feedback from the committee resulted in some minor additional language, although the group decided to move on to other business.

Plan B

There was a suggestion to set up a sub-committee to draft a Plan B, just in case Marty doesn't work out. Some feel this isn't necessary. Group will continue on with the existing resources and potentially hire some type of project manager/consultant if consultant doesn't work out.

Charlie Abell cautions the committee to not rush into this. This is the most important issue that Whitefish has faced in a long while. The future of our community rests with these decisions. He has concerns about the group being pushed into an October deadline that has been set for political reasons.

Public Comment

Jane Adams. Worked for 5 years with DNRC as the lead wildlife biologist. Left 5 years ago and since has been involved with the Montana Old Growth Project. The Old Growth Project formed to work with the Land Board and DNRC on better Old Growth policies because historically, Montana policies haven't been based on good science.

A large portion of old growth in the Stillwater Forest is located in the planning area. Old Growth may be the biggest issue regarding this planning process that hasn't been brought up yet.

Swift Creek Area and Beaver Lakes Area are the areas in question. Biodiversity rules and Old Growth are very important issues for natural historic conditions and need some very careful consideration in this plan.

Map that she available is the Forest Supervisor in Missoula from Brian Long. She is willing to give a more in depth presentation to the group on the issue and would be happy to assist group with identifying issues. Contact info is: Jane Adams, 257-4527, jadams@digisys.net.

Action:

- Jen will email Jane about Old Growth definitions to distribute to group.
- DNRC will get all Old Growth data on all lands that are within the planning area.

Ralph Sletton: President of Friends of Beaver Lake Association. Received a call from his member about increase in lot rentals. Wants to know why this is happening.

MonTrust lawsuit with DNRC determined that DNRC wasn't charging enough for cabin leases on Trust Lands. The settlement of the case was to increase the cabin rental fees 5% to be phased in over a five-year period. There is a state tax appeal board where the one has the opportunity to protest these fees.

Meeting adjourned at 8 pm.